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CLOUDED LEOPARD QUADRUPLETS TO MAKE PUBLIC DEBUT FRIDAY AT POINT DEFIANCE ZOO & AQUARIUM

Visitors will be able to see feedings of the 3-week-old cubs three times a day



Chirping softly, a set of four endangered clouded leopard cubs made their debut to the world this morning at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.

The cubs officially go on public exhibit Friday morning. Zoo visitors will be able to see the cubs during their 9:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 5 p.m. feeding times.

These feeding times, however, will change as the cubs grow.



Visitors are encouraged to check the zoo's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/PtDefianceZoo?ref=hl> and website at www.pdza.org for exhibit times. They also will be posted at the front gate.

They are just 3 weeks old, but the cubs already have spread the conservation message about their increasingly threatened species around the world.



News agencies around the globe published stories and photographs of the cubs two weeks ago when the zoo released their first official photos and video.

That publicity helps people learn about this species of elusive, arboreal cat, which is native to Southeast Asia. Scientists know their numbers in the wild are dwindling due to poaching and destruction of their habitat, primarily for the growth of oil palm trees.

But the cats are so shy and difficult to track that no one knows for certain how many of them remain in the wild. Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium is one of the leaders in research to answer this question.

Zoo visitors who see adults in the Cats of the Canopy exhibit and the cubs during their feeding times in the Cub Den also help spread the word about the need for conservation of the species.

The cubs were born May 12 to mother Chai Li (pronounced Chai-lye) and father Nah Fun (pronounced Nah-foon).

This is the fourth litter for the pair. The cubs' births are part of the Association of Zoos' & Aquariums' Species Survival Plan® managed breeding program.

They are not yet named. The zoo plans to announce the quadruplets' names and genders next week.

The cubs are being hand-reared by zookeepers, who care for them around the clock and currently feed them about every four hours. Chai Li nursed her cubs for about 30 hours but soon demonstrated that she would no longer care for them, said zoo General Curator Karen Goodrowe Beck, who holds a Ph.D. in reproductive biology. Hand-raising the tiny clouded leopards is necessary for their health, growth and development, she added.

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium is a recognized leader in conservation of the species. The Zoo Society's Dr. Holly Reed Wildlife Conservation Fund sponsors clouded leopard research throughout Southeast Asia. Goodrowe Beck and staff biologist Andy Goldfarb make periodic trips to the Khao Kheow Open Zoo in Thailand to participate in a collaborative breeding program. Zoo Education Curator Karen Povey conducts education work in Southeast Asia to help children learn about clouded leopards and the perils they face in the wild. Zookeepers in Tacoma founded The Clouded Leopard Project 15 years ago to aid in conservation of the species. And that's just a snapshot of Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium's contributions to clouded leopard conservation.

There are just 93 clouded leopards in 25 North American zoos that participate in the Clouded Leopard Species Survival Plan.® Fifteen cubs have been born through the program this year.

Counting the quadruplet cubs, 11 clouded leopards live at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.

People who are inspired by the clouded leopards' story and want to contribute to conservation programs on their behalf may donate to the Dr. Holly Reed Wildlife Conservation Fund through the donation kiosk at the Cats of the Canopy exhibit on zoo grounds or through The Zoo Society at www.pdza.org/donate

The zoo is open daily from 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

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Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest's only combined zoo & aquarium, promotes responsible stewardship of the world's resources through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities. The zoo, a division of Metro Parks Tacoma, is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).

Photo captions:

Top: Clouded leopard quadruplets are just 3 weeks old in this photo, taken on Wednesday, June 3. They were born May 12 at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.

Middle: One of four rare clouded leopard cubs born at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium May 12 poses for a portrait on Wednesday, June 3.

Bottom: An endangered clouded leopard cub is bottle fed by a zookeeper at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium. The cubs are being hand-raised by zookeepers to ensure their health, growth and development.

Photo credits: Ingrid Barrentine/Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium